

*1265 taken for final
version*

21 February 1963

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Photographic Coverage of Cuba,
September 6th to October 14th

Low-Level Flights

1. At your request, General Carter on 30 August mentioned to the Special Group the need for additional flights over Cuba and at that time brought up the matter of 101's in low-level reconnaissance. At General Carter's request, on 1 and 2 September the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance met to consider the kind of information that could be obtained through use of RF-101-F8U-type aircraft. As a result of these deliberations and because of the heavy cloud cover encountered over eastern Cuba on the September 5th mission, General Carter on 10 September 1962 addressed a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense recommending that the Secretary initiate the necessary action to provide for employment of tactical-type reconnaissance against Banes or other targets identified by the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance on 1 September 1962 as being suitable for low-level reconnaissance. A copy of General Carter's September 10th memorandum is attached at Tab A.

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2. These actions by General Carter were consistent with your desire to request low-level flights where ominous situations appeared from high-level photographic interpretation or from other sources, and the concern over the Banes installation was the first such instance.

3. In the September 14th Special Group meeting it was noted that the Secretary of Defense did not wish this operation considered until the results of CIA reconnaissance in the same area became available. Since high-level photography did not reveal any additional situations demanding low-level photography, no further request was made.

High-level Flights

4. The U-2 mission of 29 August covered virtually the entire island and identified eight SAM sites in western Cuba. It also discovered an installation at Banes that was not familiar to the photo interpreters. Subsequent research by the interpreters, based on the August 29th photography, identified the installation as a cruise missile site and the information appeared in the intelligence publications for September 17th.

5. The flight of September 5th over central and eastern Cuba identified three additional SAM sites in central Cuba but encountered heavy cloud cover over eastern Cuba, including the Banes area.

6. There was a three-week period from the 5th to the 26th of September during which there was no U-2 photography of Cuba. We finally acquired a moderately complete mosaic of the SA-2 defense of Cuba by piece-meal photographic search carried out in late September and early October.

7. During August and September U-2 missions were being flown at the rate of two per month. Because of the limited number of flights authorized, CIA made it a practice not to fly unless the weather forecast predicted that there would be less than 25 per cent cloud cover over most of the critical targets.

8. One mission had already been flown on September 5th. At a meeting in Mr. Bundy's office on September 10th, General Carter presented a CIA proposal for the second September flight--a single high-level flight designed specifically to photograph the Banes area, where earlier photography had not been conclusive, and generally to search for SAM sites in those areas of central and eastern Cuba that had not been adequately covered since August 29th. This flight if approved would have provided high quality photographic intelligence of approximately 11,700 square miles of Cuba.

9. As of September 10th, eleven SAM sites had been identified. Of the thirteen that had not yet been found, one location (Deleite) was not covered by any of the tracks proposed or approved after September 5th,

and three (Ciego de Avila, Santiago, and Maldonado) were not discernible in photography taken on October 5th of the areas in which they later were found. Thus, there were nine SAM sites that the CIA flight might have discovered sometime during the latter part of September or very early in October. The CIA-proposed single flight would have provided acceptable photographic intelligence on eight of the nine locations in which these SAM sites eventually were found. The CIA single flight would have missed Ciego de Avila.

10. However, in the September 10th meeting, at the direction of the Special Group, and at the insistence of Secretary Rusk, this plan was changed and four flights were ordered: two wholly peripheral, involving no land overflight; one over the Isle of Pines; and one over the eastern end of Cuba targeted against Banes and Guantanamo. The total number of square miles of high quality photographic intelligence that might have been expected from these four flights was appreciably less than that from the CIA-proposed single flight; however, it should be noted that these four tracks covered all of the SAM sites that the single CIA flight would have covered. In addition, one of the four tracks covered the Ciego de Avila area, which would have been missed by the single CIA flight--although the site was not yet recognizable when the mission was flown on October 5th.

11. The decision to mount four separate flights automatically delayed by several days the completion of the search for SAM sites in those portions of the island not recently photographed. The alert briefing normally was held late in the afternoon of one day, the mission plan and go-no-go briefings the next day, and the flight became airborne on the day following. This sequence thus had to be gone through four times rather than merely once.

12. It is clear, however, that the factor of weather was a much more serious obstacle to completing the coverage than were the other operational factors. Much of Cuba was under heavy cloud cover throughout most of September, and the cloud patterns were continually changing. A review of the weather forecasts for each day from September 7th to October 7th reveals only four days (15 September and 4, 6 and 7 October) on which a flight might have anticipated encountering less than 25 per cent overcast along more than one-half of the overland portions of the CIA-proposed single flight.

13. The first of these days was September 15th and Missions Nos. 3090 and 3091 were then in the briefing sequences. Missions had gone to alert every day since September 6th. By September 17th, when a mission was flown over the Isle of Pines, the weather had turned sour and no usable photography was acquired.

14. The first successful mission was flown on September 26th over the Banes-Guantanamo area. The single flight proposed by CIA might have been flown that day, although less than 25 per cent overcast was predicted for less than one-half of the overland portion of the proposed route.

15. October 4th was the first day after September 10th on which the weather forecast indicated moderately clear weather over most of the CIA-proposed route. The weather had been very bad on the 2nd and 3rd. Mission No. 3098 had gone to alert on the 3rd in anticipation of clearing weather by the 4th. It went to go-no-go on the 4th and successfully flew the southern periphery on October 5th. By the 5th, however, weather had deteriorated over much of the rest of the CIA-proposed route and only the southern coast was clear.

16. Weather over most of the CIA-proposed route was good on October 6th, but the mission flown on the 7th was then in the briefing sequence. Weather was also good over much of the CIA route on October 7th, when the last of the four flights approved on September 10th was flown.

17. In summary, it is impossible to say at this point what might have been attempted in carrying out the CIA-proposed single flight if it had been approved. The only day between September 10th and

October 4th for which there was a moderately decent forecast was September 15th. The forecasts were changing so rapidly around that date that it is unlikely that a flight could have been mounted before the weather turned bad. An attempt was made, in fact, and it failed. The weather improved appreciably beginning October 4th. By then, two of the short flights had already been successfully flown (on September 26th and 29th) and the other two were completed within the next three days (on October 5th and 7th).

18. A chronology of U-2 missions from September 6th to October 14th is attached at Tab B.

General

Knocke's Comments

CIA - proposed flight
might have been carried
out on 15 Sept.

Paper must refer to
CONOR's good judgement in
recommending the CIA-proposed
flight.

Paper should assume
that CIA-proposed flight,
if carried out, might
have generated requirement
for a further extensive flight,
which, at earliest ~~could~~
not have been made before
4 Oct - just 10 days
before the flight.

Suggest checking wx
to see which good weather day
in October would have given us

Last sentence, para 3. Reads as
though we subsided completely.
Suggest adding that wx
was preventing hi-level photography
during this time period.

First sentence, para 7. suggest
"were authorized" in place of
"were being flown."

Second sentence, para 10 "appreciably
less" will not satisfy DCI. He
will want figures.

Para 13 The fact that 15
Sept was a good wx day
will mean, in terms of the
DCI scenario, that our proposed
flight might have been made
on that day and might have
generated enough readout significance
to have asked for an extensive
flight, which could not then have been